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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (IFACAT), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[17 February 1997]

No discrimination in the observance of human rights!

1. It is contrary to the principles subscribed to by States in the international texts on human rights that authorities should be permitted to choose to observe the rights of some groups and violate those same rights when it comes to other groups within the national community.

2. IFACAT, which has already insisted on the universal dimension of human rights, and the need to observe both economic and social and civil and political rights, wishes to recall that the universality of international standards requires that all groups belonging to a country must benefit from those rights, without distinction as to race, religion, ethnic origin, political allegiance and so forth. In many countries, the authorities are practising real discrimination, denying the members of certain groups rights which are nevertheless universally recognized. This is the case in the Sudan, Myanmar and Chad, among others.

3. The authorities in the Sudan, under the pretext of "Islamicizing" the entire country, are organizing, or allowing to be organized, a public demonstration against members of the country's Christian communities. The forced conscription of young Christian boys into the Government's armed forces compels them to fight against members of their own religious group. Nearly 4 million people have had to flee areas of looting and raids. Catholic bishops from the Sudan have denounced the closure of numerous Christian schools and centres and the fact that Christian groups have no access to basic social services. Very recently, in January 1997, we learned of the destruction of the Catholic school of Dorushat, in north Khartoum, and of two Catholic schools in the Sitta Abril and Hara 48 neighbourhoods of Omdurman. The school principal, teachers and catechism instructors were arrested.

4. In Myanmar, the authorities have never accepted the results of the 1990 elections, and they are stepping up their repression of the opposition, particularly the members of the National League for Democracy, of whom Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, is the best-known leader. Not only has she been deprived of her fundamental rights to freedom of speech, movement and action, but many of the members of the organization are being arrested and tortured. This ill-treatment is frequent in the prisons, and the Myanmar authorities refuse to allow any monitoring by neutral and independent organizations. Many times in 1996, IFACAT members denounced the frequent practice of torture in Myanmar.

5. In Chad, as in several other African countries, the political authorities seem to be encouraging both the security forces and the population to practise lynchings, summary executions and ill-treatment of delinquents living in the streets. A document signed by a commander of the Special Units Group states: "... There should be no proceedings whatsoever for thieves ...

In cases of in flagrante delicto, proceed immediately to their physical elimination ..." While those who are guilty of offences should obviously be tried and punished by law, it is unacceptable that the fundamental rights to physical safety, life and legal defence are not observed in the case of "thieves". IFACAT therefore urges the Commission on Human Rights to ask the political authorities of Chad to remind the security forces that summary executions are prohibited and that thieves must be arrested and tried in conformity with the international standards subscribed to by Chad.